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Message Text

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ACTION EA-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 ICA-11
TRSE-00 OMB-01 /067 W
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R 200407Z JUL 78
FM AMEMBASSY MANILA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8794
INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
AMEMBASSY JAKARTA
AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR
AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINS, RP
SUBJECT: MARCOS LISTS CONDITIONS FOR TALKS WITH MNLF

REF: MANILA 08788

1. SUMMARY; DURING INFORMAL SESSION WITH PRESS JULY 16, PRESIDENT MARCOS REPORTEDLY REITERATED PHILIPPINE WILLINGNESS TO RESUME NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE MNLF BUT SPECIFIED THE TALKS MUST BE HELD IN THE PHILIPPINES AND WITHOUT FOREIGN PARTICIPATION. THOUGH HE DID NOT IMPLY TALKS WERE IMMINENT, THE PHILIPPINE NEWS AGENCY REPORTED THE GOVERNMENT WAS PREPARING FOR ANOTHER SERIES OF DISCUSSIONS WITH THE MNLF. THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS WAS ACTIVE AS WELL, INITIATING A SERIES OF BRIEFINGS ON THE SOUTHERN SITUATION FOR DIPLOMATS FROM ISLAMIC COUNTRIES. MARCOS' INSISTENCE THAT NEGOTIATIONS BE HELD IN THE PHILIPPINES APPEARS TO BE A HARDENING OF THE GOVERNMENT'S POSITION ON THIS POINT, WHICH HAD BEEN RELAXED FOLLOWING THE INDONESIAN-MALAYSIAN ANNOUNCEMENT THAT THEY
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WOULD HELP RESTART TALKS BETWEEN THE GOP AND MNLF. SINCE THE MNLF IS NOT PREPARED AT THE MOMENT TO COME TO MANILA OR EXCLUDE ISLAMIC CONFERENCE PARTICIPATION IN ANY FUTURE DISCUSSIONS, TALK OF RENEWED NEGOTIATIONS IS DECIDEDLY PREMATURE. END SUMMARY.

2. DURING INFORMAL SESSION WITH PRESS IN BAGUIO JULY 16,

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PRESIDENT MARCOS REPORTEDLY RESTATED PHILIPPINE WILLINGNESS TO RESUME NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE MNLF BUT AGAIN SPECIFIED THAT THE DISCUSSIONS MUST BE HELD IN THE PHILIPPINES AND WITHOUT FOREIGN PARTICIPATION. MARCOS STATED HE PERSONALLY GUARANTEED THE SAFETY OF THE MNLF NEGOTIATORS AND CHIDED THE MNLF LEADERSHIP FOR NOT REMAINING IN THE PHILIPPINES AND HIDING "BEHIND THE SKIRTS OF FOREIGN LEADERS". HE CONTINUED TO PROFESS CONFUSION OVER WHO ARE "THE REAL LEADERS" OF THE MNLF, MENTIONING NUR MISUARI, HASHIM SALAMAT AND ABDULKAYER ALONTO AS THE PRINCIPAL DISPUTANTS FOR THE MNLF'S LEADERSHIP.

3. THOUGH MARCOS DID NOT SAY ANY TALKS WERE IMMINENT, THE PHILIPPINE NEWS AGENCY REPORTED JULY 18 THAT DEPUTY DEFENSE MINISTER CARMELO Z. BARBERO HAD PREPARED A REPORT ON CEASEFIRE VIOLATIONS BY THE MNLF "AS THE NATIONAL GOVERNMENT PREPARES FOR ANOTHER ROUND OF TALKS WITH THE MORO NATIONAL LIBERATION FRONT TO SETTLE THE MINDANAO PROBLEM." BARBERO'S REPORT CHARGED THE MNLF 1,860 CEASE-FIRE VIOLATIONS: 997 BETWEEN JANUARY 20 AND DECEMBER 31, 1977, AND 863 FROM JANUARY UNTIL JUNE 1978.

4. THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS HAS ALSO GOTTEN INTO THE ACT ON MINDANOA, INITIATING A SERIES OF THREE BRIEF-INGS ON THE MINDANAO SITUATION FOR DIPLOMATS FROM ISLAMIC COUNTRIES. THE FIRST BRIEFING WAS HELD JULY 17 AND LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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COVERED CULTURAL AND SOCIAL ASPECTS OF THE MUSLIM PROBLEM. ACCORDING TO A MIDDLE EASTERN DIPLOMAT WHO ATTENDED THE SESSION, THE PRESENTATION MERELY REPEATED STANDARD GOVERN-MENT EXPLANATIONS FOR THE CONFLICT, THAT IT IS THE RESULT OF UNEVEN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF THE PHILIPPINES WHICH HAS LEFT THE SOUTHERN ISLANDS RELATIVELY UNDEVELOPED, AND THAT "CERTAIN GROUPS HAVE EXPLOITED THIS...TO BRING ABOUT A TURBULENT ATMOSPHERE CONDUCIVE TO THEIR IDEOLOGICAL PURSUITS." THE MIDDLE EASTERN DIPLOMAT DESCRIBED THE SESSION AS A TOTAL"WASTE OF TIME."

5. COMMENT: MARCOS RENEWED INSISTENCE THAT ANY FUTURE TALKS BETWEEN THE GOVERNMENT AND THE MNLF BE HELD IN MANILA APPEARS TO BE A HARDENING OF THE PHILIPPINE POSITION; AFTER THE ANNOUNCEMENT BY INDONESIA AND MALAYSIA THAT THEY WOULD ATTEMPT TO HELP RESTART THE NEGOTIATIONS BETWEEN THE MNLF AND THE PHILIPPINES, THE GOP APPEARED WILLING TO RELAX ITS REQUIREMENT THAT TALKS BE HELD IN THE PHILIPPINES (REFTEL). THE MNLF, HOWEVER, HAS GIVEN NO INDICATION THAT IT IS PREPARED TO COME TO MANILA OR EXCLUDE THE ISLAMIC CONFERENCE FROM THE NEGOTIATIONS, MARCOS' SECOND CONDITION FOR THE TALKS TO

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RESUME. UNTIL EITHER SIDE IS WILLING TO COMPROMISE ON
THESE TWO QUESTIONS, TALK OF NEGOTIATIONS IS DECIDEDLY
PREMATURE. MURPHY

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PLANNING MEETINGS, LIBERATION FRONTS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 20 jul 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978MANILA12322
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780298-0982
Format: TEL
From: MANILA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780739/aaaabgfz.tel
Line Count: 119
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 6c69a66f-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION EA
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 78 MANILA 8788
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 04 may 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 1941162
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: MARCOS LISTS CONDITIONS FOR TALKS WITH MNLF
TAGS: PINS, RP, MNLF
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkvgwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/6c69a66f-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
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